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November 20, 2016

“THE POWER OF THANKSGIVING”

(Psalm 100:4; 1 Thess. 5:18; 1Chron. 16:34; Romans 8:28; Eph. 5:18-19; Psalm 119:92)

Intro ... On this Sunday before our national Thanksgiving Day, let me direct your attention right away to Today's Key Scripture – It provides a key point of reference for us as we ‘Walk with Pneuma’ through our day to day lives.

TODAY'S KEY SCRIPTURE ...

“**ENTER** His gates with **THANKSGIVING** and His courts with **PRAISE**, give **THANKS** to Him and praise His **NAME**.”
(Psalm 100:4)

Hard to miss the point, isn't it? We are being instructed to ‘Live Thankful Lives’ ... to live lives that abound with praise to God.

This is a life that is filled to the brim with Praise to God – a life that is absolutely characterized by a ‘Spirit of Thanksgiving’ – not just one officially calendarized ‘Thanksgiving Day’ but all 365!

Just as Paul once observed that “Every day is the Lord's Day” so our Heavenly Father would say to us this morning ...

‘Every Day should be a Thanksgiving Day’.

Now before we have a chance to question whether or not such a thing can be done or even more whether or not we are willing to expend the necessary energy of mind and heart to get such a thing done, let me direct our attention to ...

TODAY'S KEY CONCEPT ...

Few things on **EARTH** are as spiritually **POTENT** as **GENUINE THANKSGIVING!**

Genuine Thanksgiving is like spiritual dynamite in our lives. It accomplishes some amazing things. The Scripture makes that clear.

This morning I would highlight several such Scriptures that point out to us just how potent this '*Spirit of Thanksgiving*' can be ... Scriptures that point out to us just what '*potent*' things a Spirit of Thanksgiving can bring about.

So here's the first '**Potent Thing**' and the Scripture that supports it ...

1. THANKSGIVING REJOICES OUR HEAVENLY FATHER'S HEART

Now what could be more '*spiritually potent*' than that ... to '*rejoice your Heavenly Father's Heart*' ... If you were sure that something would do that, wouldn't you put it right at the top of your '*To Do List*'?

Here's the supporting Scripture ...

*"Give thanks **in** all circumstances,
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."
(1 Thessalonians 5:18)*

Plainly put ... It's God's Will that we be thankful – always - in everything. And there is nothing that '*rejoices our Heavenly Father's Heart*' more than us carrying out His Will.

In a word, do you want to make your Heavenly Father Happy?
Then ... Maintain a Thankful Heart no matter what!

I know ... there are questions and maybe protestations arising in your mind but let's push on and see if they get addressed.

Here now is the second '**Potent Thing**' and the Scripture that supports it ...

2. THANKSGIVING RELEASES THE HOLY SPIRIT IN OUR LIVES

We discovered this potent reality just about a year ago when we were working our way through our '*Walking with Pneuma*' series.

To the Scripture we just looked at Paul now adds an additional phrase. The juxtaposition of these two phrases cannot be denied. Paul put them one after the other for a reason – they contain '*linking truths*'.

Here they are ...

*“Give thanks **in** all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (and) Do not put out (quench)the Spirit's fire.”*
(1 Thessalonians 5:18-19)

It's pretty obvious that a *'thankless spirit'* – a *'discontented spirit'* – a *'disgruntled spirit'* – squelches the Holy Spirit ...

It's like The Spirit is saying:

*'I can't work in this environment – It's hard to breathe,
let alone function freely in your life'.*

On the other hand, a *'Spirit of Genuine Thanksgiving'* pumps good energizing spiritual *'air'* into the situation ... A *'Spirit of Thanksgiving'* creates the environment in which our earthly companion *'Pneuma'* can function most freely and effectively.

It's like He would be saying ...

*'I love to walk with you when you are like this;
This is what heaven itself is like.'*

So ... by being genuinely thankful we can *'Please our Heavenly Father'* and *'Release the Holy Spirit'* ... pretty potent stuff!

However, though we now know two potent things that a Spirit of Genuine Thanksgiving will bring about and though we most likely agree that those would be two very desirable things to have happen, the question (and problem) remains ... How do we pull it off?

Obviously, the ball is (to some degree at least) in our court.

God will not simply *'Make us Thankful'* ... He tells us to *'Make it Happen'*.

But before Thankfulness becomes a *'Life Condition'* it begins as a *'Life Decision'*. *'I will be thankful'* says the *'would-be-obedient'* believer.

But there is so much in life in general and my life in particular that I am **not** thankful for and that I will never **be** thankful for ... How can I simply decide to be *'Continually Thankful'* – Do I simply choose to *'Live in Denial'* or pray for some kind of *'Spiritual Dementia'* that erases all my painful memories?

It's better than that ...

Genuine God-Rejoicing, Spirit-Releasing Thanksgiving doesn't rely upon me forgetting anything, rather it enables me to re-consider everything.

Here's what I mean ... Here's the breakthrough that leads us beyond the norm – beyond mere human manipulation and continual frustration.

3. GENUINE THANKSGIVING RECOGNIZES THAT THERE IS A BIGGER PICTURE

The stuff that happens in this world – the stuff that happens to us –
IS NOT THE WHOLE STORY!

It's not even the **MAIN STORY** and it's knowing that '**MAIN STORY**' and focusing upon that '**MAIN STORY**' that enables us to '**STAY THANKFUL**'.

We better get right to the Scriptures that support such a statement.

*"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever."
(1 Chronicles 16:34 - found eighteen times in OT)*

Let me follow with this most familiar one ...

*"And we know that in all things God works for the Good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose."
(Romans 8:28)*

And now let me tell you what I believe they together are intended to tell us ... What the '**Bigger Picture**' is that Thanksgiving helps us recognize.

The '*Bigger Picture*' contains the truth that our God is Good and that His Love endures forever ... For those of us who belong to Him and who are walking with and are filled by His Spirit, there is nothing ultimately bad that will ever happen to us.

Now there are things that '*look bad*' and there are things that those around us consider to '*be bad*' and that by earthly standards actually '*are bad*' but there is nothing '*ultimately bad*' that God ever allows to come our way.

Once He puts His Hand on it (as we say) ... '**It's all good**' and thus we have reason to be thankful.

You see, whether God directly caused it or merely permitted it, we know that God has complete control of it and it will serve as a useful tool in His Hand to bring about something good that otherwise would not have come.

And once we begin to 'recognize' that 'Bigger Picture', we are ready to push on to the consideration of this scripture ...

*"Be filled with the Spirit ('and') we could add ...
Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.
Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father **for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.**"
(Ephesians 5:18-19)*

This now is the 'Highest Level of Genuine God-Rejoicing, Spirit-Releasing, Bigger-Picture Recognizing Thanksgiving'.

Actually being thankful '**For Everything**' Being so confident in the truth of God's Goodness and God's Love and God's Beneficial Involvement in all things that we 'See His Heart and His Hand in everything that enters our life' and we 'Thank Him by Faith' for it all.

And what is the final outcome for us personally – other than knowing that we are causing our Heavenly Father to Rejoice and the Spirit of God to be Released and the Bigger Picture to be Recognized?

It's this ...

4. THANKSGIVING RAISES US UP ABOVE SORROW AND DESPAIR

*"If Your Law (Your Truth/Your Word/Your Wisdom) had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction."
(Psalm 119:92)*

'Pneuma' would urge us ...

'Don't perish in your affliction – Don't become overwhelmed or distraught over the disappointments or maladies of life. Allow Genuine Thanksgiving for the awesome spiritual realities I have revealed to you lift you above all of that.'

Final Thot ...

Genuine **THANKSGIVING** is a most **POTENT FORCE** in this fallen world.

It can heal our **HEARTS** and re-focus our **MINDS**.

PRACTICE it this week!